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To Honorable Judge Edgardo Ramos,

I am a Licensed speech pathologist, Board Certified Behavior Analyst and Certified Educational Leader in New York and Florida. I founded and continue to be the CFO for Emilia's Kids, Inc., which is a Center for Childhood Development in NYC since 2000. I founded Emilia's Kids as a center that would always put best practices first. A center where families and therapists could and would partner to provide services for children in need. I specialized in children and teens with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) for most of my profession. My master's degree in Speech pathology prepared me to start working with the ASD population but I decided to further my knowledge to better understand an often-misunderstood population. My Special education certification as well as my Behavior Analyst certification provided me with a vast array of knowledge and viewpoints to work with students on a holistic level.

We have had contracts with NYC and NYS for over 15 years and remain in good standing. I have been working with NYC Department of Education and NYS Department of Health for over 25 years in the delivery of critical special needs services for families and schools in our community. I continue to work with other professionals in various fields to constantly improve my practice as a professional and therefore better serve my community and families.

We moved our family domicile to Miami for various health reasons in 2013. My son was diagnosed with ADD and anxiety disorder; my aging mother required more attention and assistance, as well as my own personal health issues that were being exacerbated by the cold. Leaving NY, my company and the families I had worked with for over 18 years was the hardest decision I made. I hired an interim director in NY and allowed myself a year of getting settled, I decided to look for consulting work to keep working on my clinical skills. It took me 6 months to find a center suitable. I was very careful about reputation and culture of the center. After 25 years in the profession, I was not going to align myself with a center/establishment that did not have ethics, best practices and the culture of compassion for our families and students. After touring the center, meeting the staff, interviewing with David and Mary Pike and researching the center's reputation in the community, I joined Crystal Academy part time in May 2014. I felt their ideals and vision for the ASD population was align with my own high standards.

In September 2014, Crystal Academy needed a Full time Speech Director and I volunteered for the position and held it until June 2017. During this time, I began to work with David Pike Jr. and his parents, David and Mary Pike in regard to David Jr.'s speech, language and behavioral needs. In 2017, I worked with David Jr. as his main provider. Then in 2018, I had to return to my CFO role for my company and adopted a consultative role in Crystal Academy, with my main role being High School Curriculum.

David Jr. was in the High school at that time, so I continued to have interactions with David Pike.

As an employer, Mr. Pike had a reputation for being fair and ethical. And in all my dealings with him, his priority was always Crystal Academy and being able to help as many families in need as possible. He would spend every day at Crystal and was always accessible to staff and families. He spent his days improving the technology and needs of the staff.

As an advocate for the ASD community, I knew of many families in need who could not

afford the services. Mr. Pike was always trying to find a way these families could access these critical services for their child, He would reduce fees, forfeit profits, and access fundraising to offer these families tuition and services their children could not live without. A large part of our student population are severely handicapped, being nonverbal and sever intellectual impairment. Many are also severely aggressive to themselves and to others. The students that came to Crystal Academy were usually thrown out of many other centers and had no where to go. At Crystal Academy, these children were always accepted and provided with the best care possible.

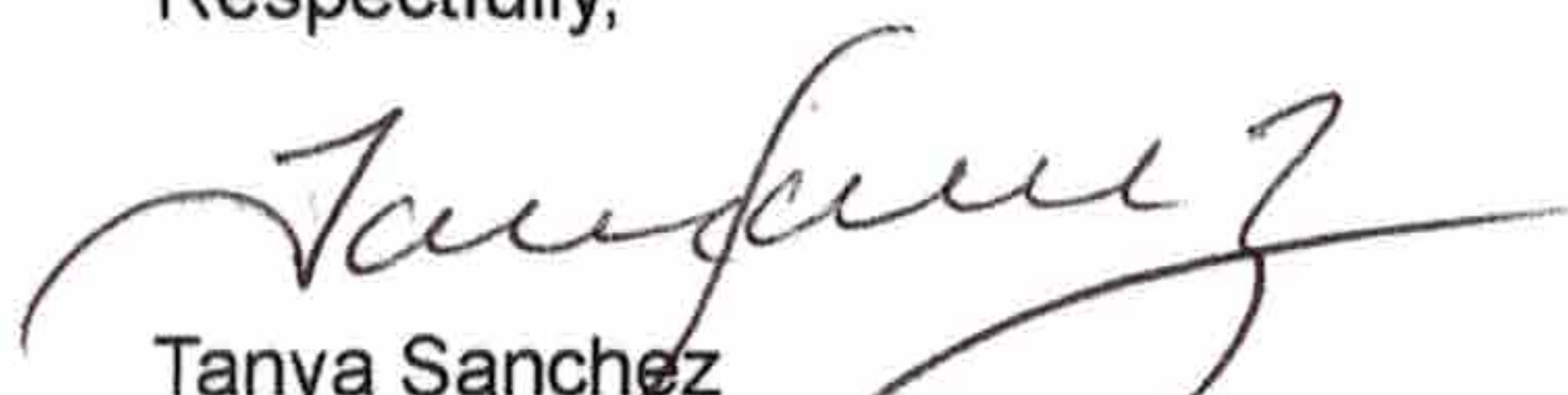
As a father of an ASD child, Mr. Pike was involved in every team meeting that took place over the years. He was constantly providing input in these meeting and accepting advice on how to improve his interactions with his son. I would request weekend reports to assist David Jr. in retelling and many weekends Mr. Pike spent with his son working on activities to help his son improve. I received weekly videos or photos of painting together, science projects, robot building, and of course Disney character/movies. Mr. Pike was always willing to put his needs of his son first and really enjoy him as an individual, loving him as a son, despite all hardships. His compassion, love and patience always evident. The bond between the two David's was and is critical for the child's progress.

David Jr. has a diagnosis of Autism, intellectual disability and comorbid anxiety disorder. He understands where his father is going but time and change is very difficult for David Jr. to manage. When Mr. Pike traveled, it was always evident in his son's behavior. He does well with predictability and structure and conversely, will engage in self injurious behaviors, such as hitting his head if very anxious. David Jr. requires constant supervision, he is unable to navigate the community and the world outside of his home independently. Simple things such as crossing a street, continue to be a safety hazard for David Jr. at 19 years old. His parents have worked tirelessly in constructing a program that offers predictability and structure for their son to be successful on a daily basis and be able to access his education, typical peers and function in the community. But he cannot survive without his parents, more so his father who has taken on the role of going into the community with David when he is out of therapy.

The negative impact of losing Mr. Pike to his family – especially his son David Jr. – and to the ASD community would be devastating. I have witnessed his compassion, his dedication, his patience and his ethics as an employer, advocate, father and husband.

Thank you for your time in reading my letter and if there are any questions please feel free to contact me at 917-854-3772.

Respectfully,



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